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THE FIGURATIVE ELEMENT IN JOB. I.

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In this discussion of the figurative element in the book of Job we cannot hope to do more than point out the general characteristics of the figurative style. In connection with this element there arise many questions which belong to other and special departments of the criticism of the book, such as its origin, authorship and place of writing; but with these we have nothing to do. The line which we follow in this investigation is only one of many in which this element may be studied with profitable results; and in a book where figure, poetry and description abound, as here, we can in a single study cover but a limited field. We undertake to consider the figurative element only as it appears in the work of the different characters of the book and as it gives a key to their individual genius and temper. With regard, then, to this personal use of language, we raise the question, Is there discoverable in the speeches of the book a tendency of the individual speakers toward a certain continuous style of figurative language? Do we find them adapting their language to their individual views of the problems of the book, and do we observe that their differences in stand-point and motive correspond with differences in the source and use of figurative illustration?

With this purpose in mind we apply these questions to the speeches of Eliphaz, the first of Job's three friends, and if we understand his position correctly, his figures and language are what we might expect from such a position. Eliphaz represents the theological dignity and learning of his time. He stands for that explanation of the human life and the universe and God's dealings with these that had been up to his time sufficient to answer all questions. Here is the first recorded dissatisfaction with orthodoxy, which is called to explain itself, and throughout this book we cannot but be impressed with the fact that no bias of the author has put anything in the way of each speaker's saying the best that could be said for his own proposition. The figures of Eliphaz are the traditional figures of his time, country and creed. His speeches are a careful collection of the best metaphors and comparisons of the old faith. He selects the most striking of the old similes, forms of speech into which had been condensed the doctrines of the years, but there is nothing new or spontaneous in them. The advice to Job is that of the preacher and not the friend. His language is cold, his figures clear cut and beautiful, but they never come down to Job's individual case.

One particular trait appears especially prominent in his figures, that of *impersonality*. His speech is all general. He is treating not of Job's case but of the case of mankind. He is always didactic and brings no help to Job in his weariness. Even later in the book where, having tired of this indirect strain, he falls to recounting Job's particular sins, he is still general; the sins are the sins Job *ought* to have committed; they are the old offenses of landlords: "the taking of

pledges for nought, stripping the naked, withholding water and bread and turning the widows away.”* His points are the old points, his illustrations the old illustrations, always expressed in the most perfect form but bringing nothing to the solution of this particular man’s life problem.

One main idea seems to follow itself out in his speech, the idea of wickedness working out its own destruction according to law. To him everything accords with a law which works itself out as regularly as his own rhetorical arrangement of it.

Eliphaz’s wicked man is no man whom he or Job ever saw. He is the wicked man he has heard of, the sinner as he *should* be, one who “plows iniquity, sows trouble and reaps the same”† according to his favorite simile. The wicked man’s destruction is not that of any man to whom he could point, but is like “the extinction of the lions; his children are far from safety, he finds the sword, blight, famine and desolation,” premature death and obliterated memory, but all this means nothing by which the hearer can profit. His description of man’s low estate in God’s sight is theoretical; “his foundation is in the dust, he is crushed like a moth, goes down like the houses of clay, or like a loosened tent cord is his hold on life.”‡ His rewards and punishments and the figures by which he represents them are all temporal, all sins are carnal, all goodness is goodness of action and all prosperity visible.

God is the traditional giver of rain, friend of mourners, deliverer from famine and the sword. His conception of God brings out no new beneficence and no new poetical figure. His “Good Man” is always visibly good and his reward is the good reputation, the peaceful tent, the thrifty farm, the good old age and the blessing of unnumbered offspring. His account of the “vision in the night when deep sleep falleth upon man,”§ though it contributes little to doctrine, contributes much to form and is the most delicate and skillful of his descriptions, and perhaps it is not too much to say of it that it is not surpassed by any of the appropriations of literature.

Throughout we find that Eliphaz’s figures and arrangement of thought are harmonious and complete, and in passing to the figures of Bildad we pass to the consideration of a totally different purpose, plan and atmosphere. Eliphaz was a man of argument, Bildad of description. The purpose of the former is to convert; of the latter to overawe. From reason we pass to imagination. Eliphaz gives us one grand picture absorbing all its details, Bildad a rapid and vivid panorama. One depends for effect on *completeness*, the other on *single impressions*; one is universal, the other local. The most striking change is the change of place. Bildad’s scenes are from the home of tradition, Arabia. To his mind mere description of the truth is enough and so he does not argue but puts into his description the accumulated poetry and fervor of Arabic tradition. Where Eliphaz was calm and considerate of Job, Bildad is ungoverned and ruthless. His literary temper he declares at once “How long wilt thou declare these things?”|| He hates long introductions and wordy subtleties.

The first point about which his figures cluster is the supremacy of God’s law and his remoteness from man’s uncleanness. His figures are few, but almost his first one gives us the clue to his idea of the punishment of sin. It is the same as that of Eliphaz. Job’s children are “given into the hands of their transgres-

* Ch. 22:6,7,9a.

† Ch. 4:8.

‡ Ch. 4:19,21.

§ Ch. 4:13 sqq.

|| Ch. 8:2.

sion.”* Punishment comes from one’s own wickedness unaided by anything from without. The second figure developing his view of the “law of sin and death” is that of the fowler. The wicked man’s “own counsel shall cast him headlong. For he is cast into a net by his own feet and he walketh upon the toils. A gin shall take him by the heel and a snare shall lay hold on him; a noose is hid for him in the ground.”† It is a vivid picture of the wicked man caught at last by his own transgression.

From his idea of punishment we turn to look at his method of describing man, for this is a central idea with Bildad. He has no respect for the individual life or personality. The only testimony that he trusts comes from men in the mass. One man’s testimony out of agreement with the testimony of tradition counts for nothing. “We are but of yesterday and know nothing.”‡ When Job pleads the possibility of a mistake in the old conception of life, he is met with the withering oriental sarcasm : “Shall the earth be forsaken for thee or shall the rock be removed out of its place ?”?§ A new departure in his figures describing man is his comparison of him with the moon and stars in ch. 25, which is a change from Eliphaz’s use of the angels, indicating an oriental tendency to identify stars with spirits. But it is in Bildad’s description of the “Wicked Man’s Fate” that he finds the broadest field for his rhetoric. Eliphaz gave us a catalogue of the wicked man’s dangers but Bildad paints each one. The “darkness” which surrounds Eliphaz’s sinner becomes the “darkened tent;” the “snares” become the visible “fowler’s traps.” Like the luxuriant flag and the rush when water is withdrawn, perishes the evil-doer.|| Unstable as the “spider’s house”¶ is his trust and to this day the proverb remains in the land. Like some “shady, well-rooted tree,”** suddenly withered, his life influence fails. He sends forth the Arab’s cry “Fate has put out my lamp.” We see the “darkened tent, the forsaken hearth, the straightened steps”†† and then in solemn and brilliant figures his final destruction. The “first born of death,” a terribly impressive figure for Job’s own disease, lays hold upon him, secures him and makes him ready for the “king of terrors.” Then comes the last horror of the Shemitic mind, the worst that this representative of tradition could find, namely, the desolate and accursed home and the forgotten name. The end of the 18th chapter embraces all these figures heaped up in a relentless sequence; brimstone marks the curse of his habitation and loathsome creatures bear witness to the eternal unfruitfulness of his domain.

In the speeches of Zophar we find the search for figures directed not by a desire to argue or to describe but by a desire for a more *personal* encounter. With Zophar every figure is a sharp thrust not at Job’s *theory* but at Job *himself*. Through Zophar the debate becomes hateful and bitter. Zophar brings out some new figures but no new and distinct source of figures. His style is as difficult to characterize in a single word as is his personality. He gives us five main descriptions. His panegyric on the Divine Wisdom, “High as heaven, deeper than sheol”## gives us his idea of man’s position in relation to God. To his mind servile obedience to arbitrary rule is all we have a right to think of.

Every speaker in turn describes Job’s future prosperity if he will repent, but strangely out of keeping with his general temper the picture of Zophar seems the best. It is the most restful of the promises of the friends, and his idea of the

* Ch. 8:4.

† Ch. 18:7b-10a.

‡ Ch. 8:9a.

§ Ch. 18:4b,c.

|| Ch. 8:11-13.

¶ Ch. 8:14.

** Ch. 8:16-18.

†† Ch. 18:5-7.

Ch. 11:8.

reward of virtue is of a higher type than that of the others, higher than Eliphaz's "peaceful farm"† or Bildad's "shouting lips":‡ "Thou shalt forget thy misery; thou shalt remember it as waters that have passed away: and thy life shall be clearer than the noonday; though there be darkness, it shall be as the morning."§ . . . Holiness rather than temporal restoration seems to be the inducement to a change of life. The old conception of sin working out its own punishment, common to all three, is dressed up again in the figure of an epicure "in whose mouth wickedness is sweet":|| and who is compelled by his own gluttony to disgorge what he has swallowed. Each of the friends has some favorite point on which he particularly lavishes his figures. In Bildad's speeches it is the terrible *procession* of the wicked man's terrors, in Zophar's it is merciless *storm* of disaster that falls upon him, with sudden and utter bewilderment. In Zophar's hand "Justice becomes a stiletto, not a sword." In the brilliance of the other friends' figures we forget Job in our wonder at the wicked man's doom; but Zophar would turn our attention to the sinner himself with contempt and loathing.

[To be continued.]

TIELE ON BABYLONIAN-ASSYRIAN CULTURE. V.

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ART.

Art occupies so prominent a position in the life of Babylonia and Assyria, and presents so many striking and peculiar features, that even the merest sketch of their culture would be incomplete without a discussion of at least some of its phases. Yet in such a discussion one must proceed with caution; for in the determination of the proper sequence of undated monuments, so much depends upon subjective estimation, that one is not safe from mistakes without long and intelligent study of the history of art. The view one takes of the development of Babylonian-Assyrian art depends necessarily upon his estimate of the period of such works; and his judgment of the character and proper value of this artistic growth must be influenced largely by his aesthetic perception. In this sketch it will not be possible to discuss technicalities, but we shall limit ourselves to the chief features which belong to the history of the people and found our conclusions upon them.

In the art of Babylonia and Assyria, we find still further proof of the unity of the two nations; all leading characteristics being of the same national school, and the points of difference shown in mere details, works found in Telloh, Babel and Nineveh presenting the same general features. This is well illustrated by the materials used in building; there being no stone found in Babylonia, these were chiefly dried and burnt bricks; stone was used only for foundations, or, like the nobler metals, for adornment, in statues, or bas-reliefs.

In Assyria, where they had not only stone in abundance, but skill to use it, the inhabitants showed themselves more willing to construct and restore frail structures of brick, than to deviate from the architectural customs handed down from their ancestors, and build of more lasting material.

† Ch. 5:24 sqq.,

‡ Ch. 8:21.

§ Ch. 11:16,17.

|| Ch. 20:12-16.